

It had been a few days, and Rigormortis had urged his mate into moving to a different area. It was more wooded, the ground fuller, with more things to catch, but nothing large, only birds, and the occasional fish or rabbit. Rigormortis had set up their den a little ways from the water, just in case anything lurked beneath the surface of the pond in wait of his frail mate. He would /not/ allow anything to harm him under his watchful eye. He had managed to catch a few decent fish the first day they had moved there, and as a result both had a little more energy to expend. Rigor knew he wasn't going to catch anymore food, and so he decided it was about time he started preparing for Fawnstep to lay their clutch.

"I'm going to go and collect materials for our clutch nest, small one." He said softly, nibbling at Fawnstep's crest affectionately. "Do stay safe while I am gone, I won't be very long." He said, bobbing his head in farewell as he trotted off for the trees to go gather clay, sticks and other materials.

Little did he know that there was a large utahraptor nearby- a black male with a white underbelly and yellow cheeks, somewhat resembling a penguin-watching his mate. It, too, was starving- and it, like rigormortis, had no qualms about hunting other dinosaurs- especially ones with nutrient rich eggs in their belly. It waited until the larger of the two disappeared, before moving around to find a better angle to attack the unsuspecting gravid Cryolophosaurus.

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It had been terribly difficult for Fawnstep to move all this way, especially to move from where they had rested for those few days. To say it had been slow going would be an understatement, but he'd managed it. Now he was certain that wherever they ended up, he wouldn't be able to travel much further before their eggs were laid.

The food here was more plentiful at least, even if they had to work harder to find it. Fawnstep hadn't had enough energy to feel bad for not being able to contribute, but just promised himself that once the eggs were laid, he would put as much time and effort as he could into hunting for Rigormortis in return as he could. It would become his purpose in life, he swore it to himself.

"Be safe, large one," Fawnstep chuckled in response, blinking slowly at his mate as he started away. "I'll find a nice spot we can build the nest. Try to find some heather? I doubt there'll be any here, but if you can. It smells nice."

He watched until Rigormortis was gone in the trees before he laid his head on the ground, his eyelids sliding half shut. He was still hungry, but not so weary that he couldn't even keep his head up. He just wanted a moment to rest his eyes before convincing himself to stand up and walk around their temporary territory. At least Rigormortis was big enough to defend it if anyone decided to wander in.

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Funnily enough, or more accurately surprisingly enough, Rigormortis did actually manage to find some heather. Well, at least he thought that's what he had found. It had a nice floral smell that didn't clog up his nose, and it clung to his skin nicely. He grabbed up as many of the plants he could find, and found some wet clay, bundling it into a wet ball and scooping it into his claws. It was heavy, probably weighing as much as pre-clutch Fawnstep, but he could manage it. For his children. Gathering up some moss and a few feathers he found along with some sticks, the large Cryolophosaurus began to make his way back to his mate so he could make their nest for when he inevitably laid their clutch of eggs.

The moment Fawnstep laid down, back facing away from him, the utahraptor, Pyre, crept out of the bushes he was hiding in, coming right in close before pouncing on the gravid Cryo, digging his mud-caked claws as deep as he could (which wasn't too deep- they'd been filled from scraping the ground for morsels of food) and tried to bite Fawnstep's neck. After not being able to get his jaws around it well enough for a killing bite, he clamped his jaws down on one of his arms at the shoulder, ragging his head around like a Rottweiler till he felt more than heard the crunch of it being pulled from the socket.

Rigormortis was almost back by now, happily strolling along with his finds, when he caught a whiff of something foreign. It was being interfered with by Fawn's scent, so he couldn't quite make out what it was, but it was definitely something alive and nearby. Quickening his gait, making his way back faster, Rigor feels unease curling in his stomach like cold flames, and he quickly started to run, still holding onto what he had found in case his unease was uncalled for.

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He'd just wanted a moment's rest, but instead he jerked his head up and tensed as he heard the rustle of undergrowth behind him. Fawnstep didn't have time to even try to stand before something pounced on him, flattening him to the ground. Pain lanced across his back as claws pierced his scaled skin, and an instant later he felt the pressure of teeth against the back of his neck.

Fawnstep let out a screech of pain and threw himself to the side, twisting his neck to try to get the attacker between his teeth, or pull his legs up to get his claws between them. The teeth worrying into his shoulder drew another agonized cry from him, reaching a fever pitch as he felt the sickening, wet \*pop\* of his bones grinding against each other.

He reached up to scratch with his other arm at the same moment he clamped his jaws around the smaller dinosaur's neck, but he couldn't find purchase through the mouthful of feathers he'd gotten.

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Upon hearing the screech from his mate, Rigormortis began to sprint, his tired body carrying itself as fast as it possibly could towards the sound of his mate's distress. He was panicking, his breath coming in quick puffs as he dreaded the possibility that he was going to come back to his mate and their unborn eggs dead.

Upon arriving, rigormortis saw the utahraptor on Fawnstep's back, and he saw \*\*\*red\*\*\*. How dare this, this disgusting creature attack HIS mate? His beloved? Did it think it would get away with it? Rigormortis never lost momentum, dropping all his collected items as he barrelled into the utahraptor, tearing him off his mate and sending them tumbling in a pile of snarling teeth and claws, feathers flying all over. Rigormortis was pulling great chunks of feathers from Pyre, blood welling up in the wounds as his skin tore from the attack.

Rigormortis tripped, going over on his side and landing heavily on his back with a thump, crushing the Utahraptor and breaking a few ribs, causing him to wheeze out in pain, which gave the large Cryo the chance to scramble up and bite down on his throat, crunching down. Pyre's legs ran wildly as his eyes went wide, before he gasped for air a few times and went limp.

Scrambling to get to his mate, he let out a distressed call, trying to assess the damage that had been done to him. "Fawn?! Fawnstep?! Are you okay?"

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As soon as the weight of the attacking dinosaur was lifted off of Fawnstep, the cryo collapsed onto the ground in a heap. His legs churned as he tried to stand, but he'd landed with his injured forearm in the air, so he couldn't use it to leverage himself up as he normally would. He still felt the pain of his scratches but from far away, as if it was someone telling him about it rather than something he himself experienced. His shoulder was a different story though, blinding pain radiating from the limb in waves that followed his racing heartbeat.

He let out pained whimpers as he lay there in the grass and dirt, hearing the ferocious sounds of the fight, praying that Rigormortis would end it swiftly before he too was hurt.

Fawnstep heard his mate's distressed call and the sound of his name, and he lifted his head, his breathing labored. He turned his head to try to get a look at the wounds, but it was too much. He laid his head back down on the ground, his face twisted in pain.

"Sh-Shoulder," he groaned, unable to see the deep scratches and bite marks along his upper arm and shoulder that seeped blood. "Press on it," he gasped, his eyes bright with pain.

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Rigormortis carefully took his mate's arm in his jaws, pressing down on his back with his hand and pulling his arm up at the same time. It slipped back into place with a sickening wet pop, and

Rigor immediately let go to tend to his other injuries, licking over the blood. "Are you okay? Are you injured anywhere else? Are the eggs okay?" He asked, worried.

Eventually, after many reassurances from his mate and insistent fussing from Rigormortis, they had both calmed down. Eventually, Rigormortis spoke, hesitantly. "I...I know you don't want to, but.... But we need to eat. \*you\* need to eat. And...there's nothing for us to eat, except, well....that." He said, looking over at the other dinosaur. He knew it would weigh heavy on his mate's conscience to consume another dinosaur, but they had no choice.